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Ron Blunt Photograph

The newly renovated Eisenhower Theater  
 at the Kennedy Center.

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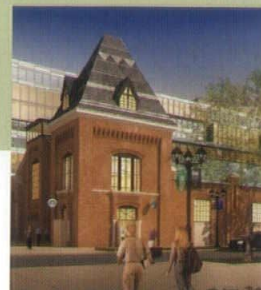
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ON THE COVER: Interior of the Goldstein Residence, as renovated by Shinberg.Levinas Architectural Design.  
Photo by Shinberg.Levinas



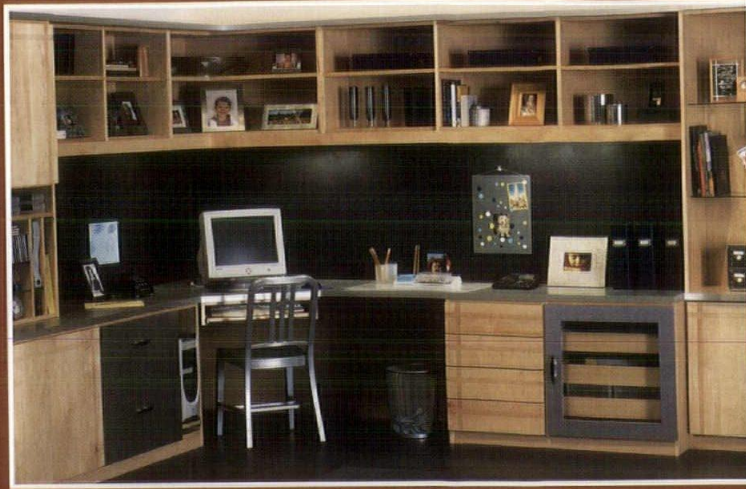
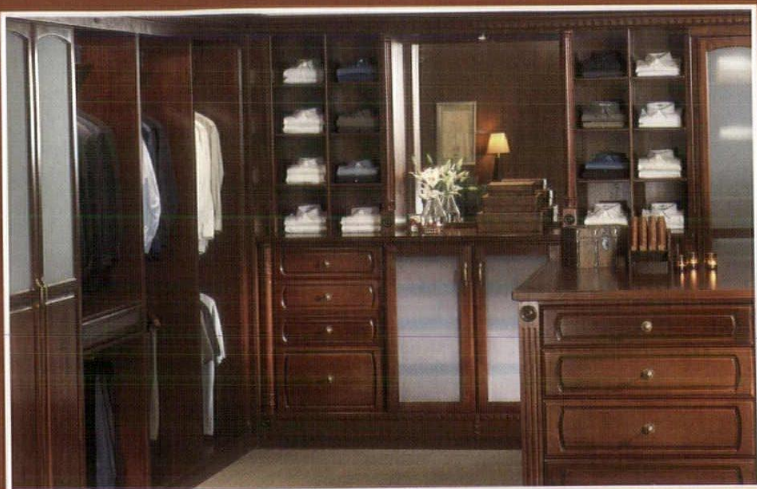
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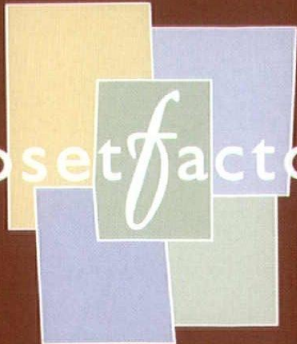
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## NEW BEGINNINGS

David Hamilton



Spring is all about a fresh start. Open the windows—let the fresh air in. As I write this I have just returned from a particularly breezy moment in the history of this city and this country, the inauguration of our 44th president. Breezy on the one hand because I stood for four hours in the cold with 1.8 million of my fellow citizens; breezy in another way, though, because it all feels rather new. We can talk about being *fellow citizens* without irony or cliché. Being a citizen is now a big responsibility, as our new President told us, and we are up to the challenge.

And just to savor the moment a little longer, it was amazing to be in a crowd that size that was so civil. When the President took the oath of office, everybody was very quiet, until we all erupted just a beat after "...so help me God." Even as we tried to leave from our vantage point right under the Washington Monument, and got stuck in a jersey-barrier bottleneck, everyone was pleasant. I met a nice lady from Kentucky who was feeling particularly blessed to have been there. The cold didn't matter. And it really didn't, it was bracing. A fresh start.

# Welcome!

One of the challenges we all face these days is the economy and that has affected our own architecture market. Many firms have faced layoffs. And while we don't know when the economy is going to recover, the Chapter Board has been working hard to meet the challenge and take care of our members who are having a rough time. As creative as they can be on their projects, architects are looking to harness that energy to help guide the country out of this difficult time. I recommend you look at Rebuild & Renew, at [www.aia.org/rebuildandrenow](http://www.aia.org/rebuildandrenow). It's a plan that takes advantage of the crisis to build better, greener, more vibrant communities. Leave it to architects to turn a crisis on its head and make a difference.

Our spring issue is also about taking an existing situation and making it better. Seamlessly renovating or adding to an existing building is an art in itself as we show in this issue. **Steven Dickens, AIA**, writes about the transformation of several buildings into outstanding facilities for the DC Public Schools and charter schools. He also describes a former school that has been converted into a residential development. Editor **G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA**, writes about the renewal of a prominent theater space, and also highlights extraordinary kitchen and bathroom renovations that make a big difference. **Ron O'Rourke** shows us the right way to do a home addition with four different examples. **Sarah Smith**, whose day job is education manager for AIA | DC, takes over the helm of our GreenDC section with an ingenious solar installation. And **Abby Davis** returns with our product section, DetailsDC, proving that even in a recession there is cool stuff to buy.

It's a challenging and exciting time to be here in Washington. Just ask my 1.8 million fellow citizens!

Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA  
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**Ronald O'Rourke** ("Smart Design at Home") is a regular contributor to **ARCHITECTUREDC**.

**Sarah Smith** ("GreenDC") is education and events manager for AIA | DC.



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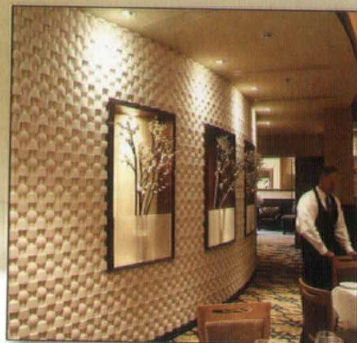


Photos by Michael Moran

## Founding Farmers • Nextilet • Poppy

by Abby Davis

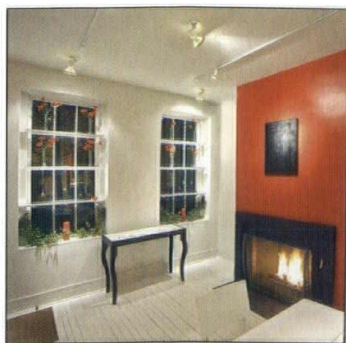
**Founding Farmers** opened last fall as DC's first restaurant to achieve the LEED Gold standard, making it the greenest restaurant in town. **CORE architecture + design** used a classic farmhouse as inspiration, abstracting the idea for a unique perspective. A collective of 40,000 American family farmers, with Graham Duncan serving as executive chef, Founding Farmers strives to be green in every aspect, using renewable materials and keeping energy output low. All menu items are regional and seasonal. Walls are made of reclaimed wood from barns. The PaperStone products used in the bathrooms are ideal for home kitchens as well ([www.paperstoneproducts.com](http://www.paperstoneproducts.com)). A patio with additional seating will be opening later this spring. Get inspired by Founding Farmers' green approach and take the metro there instead of driving! Both the Foggy Bottom and Farragut West stops (blue/orange line) are within walking distance. Located at **1924 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW**; visit [www.wearefoundingfarmers.com](http://www.wearefoundingfarmers.com), or make your reservation online through Open Table. Average dinner check is \$30-35/person.



Courtesy of Nextilet

**Nextilet** is a line of three-dimensional wall coverings in cultured marble, which provides greater flexibility than stone and is also a 50% recycled pre-consumer material. Creator Adriana Baler, who also teaches at the Corcoran School of Art and Design, designs from her studio in Silver Spring, MD. She currently has three collections: **LINX**, **PENTA**, and **DOME**.

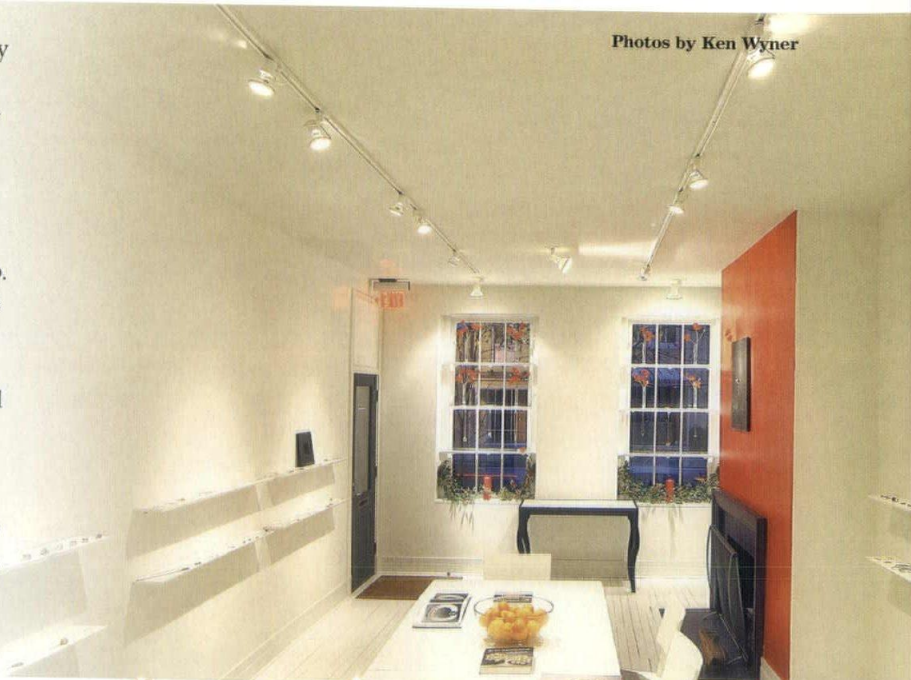
Recent **LINX** installations include Ruth's Chris Steakhouse in Santa Barbara, CA; CityView Racquet Club in Long Island City, NY; and Koxis clothing store in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The **DOME** design was featured in *Architectural Record's* December 2008 issue. Urban Archaeology distributes the Nextilet line stateside ([www.urbanarchaeology.com](http://www.urbanarchaeology.com)). Baler has also designed tiles for Ann Sacks Tile and Stone, available at their Georgetown showroom (3328 M Street NW). To view more pictures of her work or to contact Ms. Baler, visit her website at [www.adrianabalerstudio.com](http://www.adrianabalerstudio.com). Price range is \$50-60/sq.ft.



Photos by Ken Wyner

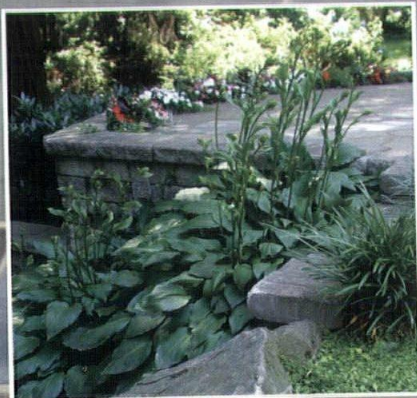
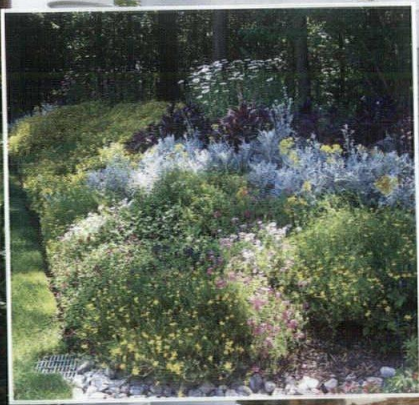
**Poppy**, Heidi Hess's new jewelry shop off Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown, features one-of-a-kind pieces with a personal story to tell. Hess, whose grandmother was a jewelry designer as well, creates the pieces in her in-store workshop. She also makes Hestia Daemons for the home, inspired by the ancient Greek goddess of the hearth and family. Hess wanted

her shop to have the "authenticity" of a home setting: in the middle of the room is a large, family-style dining room table where artist and client can talk and collaborate; a cozy fireplace burns nearby. Architect **Travis Price, AIA**, balanced the eclecticism of Hess's pieces with simplicity of space. Pieces are showcased on long white shelves; walls are mostly bare and white, accented by a few punches of bold color. A high countertop elongates the room and hides Hess' workspace. Hess also takes commissions. Poppy is open Wednesday through Saturday, 11:00 to 7:00 pm; Sunday, 12:00 to 5:00 pm, and by appointment. **3235 P Street, NW**; visit <http://poppymetals.com>. Collection sells for \$45-350; commissioned pieces start at \$150 and upwards, depending on complexity.



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# School's In:

## Architects Reshape DC Public Schools

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA

There's a huge amount of energy, innovation, and expertise pouring into DC public schools these days. Much of the effort quite properly revolves around curricula and standards of discipline. But architecture is increasingly playing a big role, too, partly because the provision of quality facilities is a rare facet of education reform embraced by people of almost all viewpoints, and partly because the rise of public charter and magnet schools has introduced competition for students. As **Milton Shinberg, AIA**, noted, "Nowadays the parents interview the building, not just the staff."

Shinberg should know, since his firm, **Shinberg,Levinas Architectural Design**, has worked on more than a dozen DC public charter schools. Two of the firm's most recent projects were an elementary school for the DC Preparatory Academy (DC Prep), on Edgewood Street, NE, and the Two Rivers Public Charter School, on 4th Street, NE. The two buildings have a lot in common: both are renovations of former warehouses; both have an industrial loft aesthetic; both have atrium-like spaces with grand stairs; both employ color in striking but purposeful ways; and both had very limited budgets, forcing an emphasis on quality rather than quantity. Yet the educational philosophies of the two schools are quite different, and a close look reveals that each school's design reflects its distinct pedagogical approach.

### Prep Course

DC Prep's straightforward mission is to "bridge the educational divide in Washington." The school's operational model is mostly top-down, with highly qualified, committed educators using a carefully crafted system to produce measurable results. The system is demanding both for students, who spend about 30 percent more time in class than is typical in DC schools, and for teachers, who are "on call" each weeknight to assist students with questions about their homework. The academy already runs several schools and intends to open more.

The new DC Prep elementary school stands in a narrow zone of light industrial buildings along the Metro Red Line and CSX railroad tracks in Northeast DC. While the area is not desolate, the setting remains resolutely industrial, notwithstanding the curious fact that almost



A corridor at DC Prep.  
Inset: The building before renovation.

Photos by Shinberg,Levinas



The core space at DC Prep.

Photos by Shinberg,Levinas

all the surrounding warehouses have been converted to charter schools. DC Prep's new building responds to that context by focusing inward, a strategy that dovetails nicely with the school's disciplined *modus operandi*.

In the depths of the building, a skylit grand stair, mini-atrium, and adjacent multipurpose room create an immediately palpable center. Ringing the core are corridors with windows at each end, while classrooms occupy the outer ring. All spaces have doors with glass panels, helping to create an impression of considerable natural light and connection to the outdoors, but this is a clever illusion: in fact, due to the surroundings and the former warehouse use, there are not many exterior windows, and the ones that are there are not large, but their effect is amplified by skillful placement. Outside light can be seen from almost any point in the facility.

Colors and forms are carefully employed for architectural and psychological purposes. The round columns with mushroom-shaped tops are painted yellow throughout. The lobby is a landmark, thanks to the red stair and new skylights. In the corridors, one side is typically straight and painted off-white while the other has a subdued blue wall that zigzags behind the yellow columns. Each classroom has one colored wall (the color varies) with the other walls off-white.

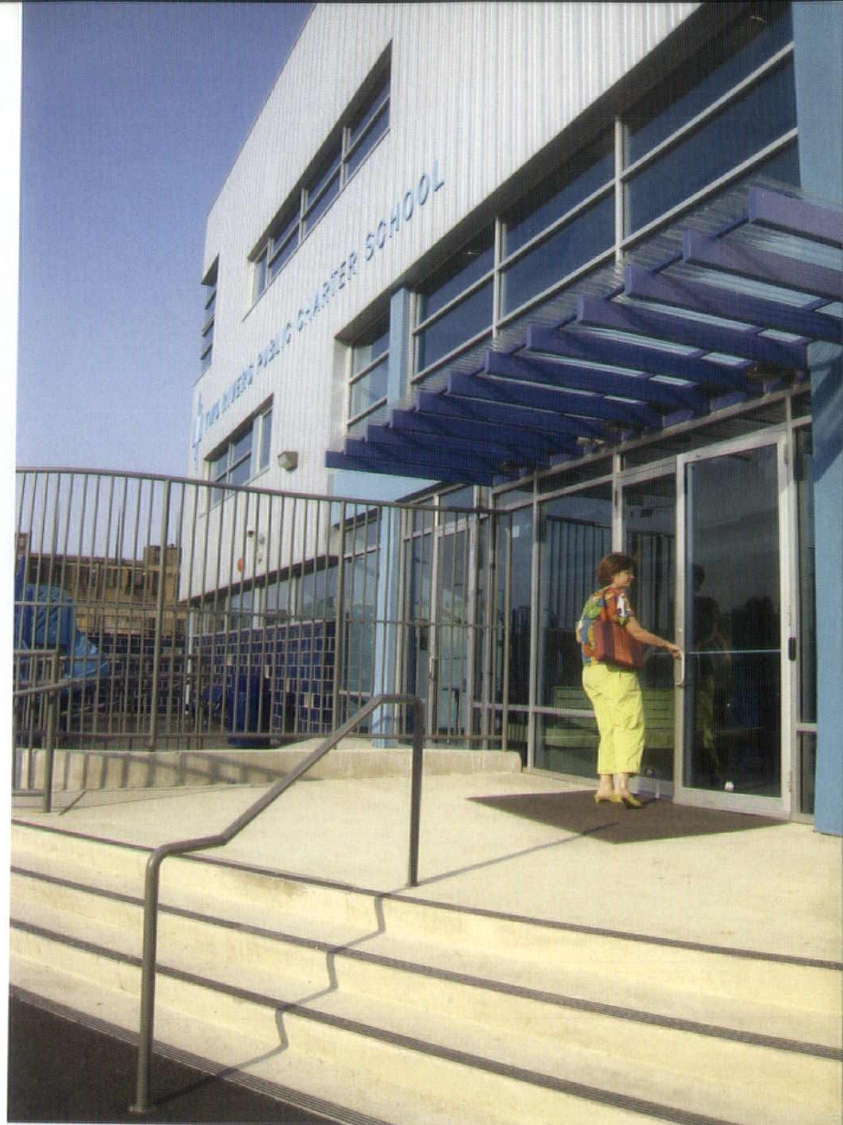
All of this reflects a deliberate—and, according to principal Dr. Doreen Land, successful—effort to make the lobby an energetic and social space in contrast to the atmosphere of calm and concentration in the classrooms, with the corridors mediating between the two. The result is a facility that serves the academy's goal of providing "a coherent and exciting learning environment" that prepares students for higher academic pursuits.

## An Architectural Expedition

The Two Rivers Public Charter School was formed by a group of parents from the Capitol Hill neighborhood who had a particular vision for their children's education that they call "expeditionary learning." After an extensive search for a site, they settled upon a former liquor warehouse at the corner of Florida Avenue and 4th Street, NE, to become their permanent and only school building, in contrast to the multi-facility DC Prep consortium.

The existing building was not large enough, however, and required the addition of a third story. Shinberg.Levinas accomplished this by means of a prefabricated steel structure that was placed on the former roof. The new and old structures are united through a corrugated metal skin that spills downward from the addition over the old building, where it also provides needed insulation. On the interior, new steel columns and beams were added to the original concrete structure to support the increased loads. The dual structural systems are celebrated in vivid colors: exposed concrete in purple, steel in blue-green.

At Two Rivers, there is substantial overlap between the staff and the parents, and consequently every design decision involved a lot of back-and-forth. No room was taken for granted; each space's conceptual purpose was



Exterior of the renovated Two Rivers school.

Photo by Shinberg.Levinas



Central gathering space at the Two Rivers school.

Photo by John Woo



photo by Shinberg.Levinas

Exterior of the building before renovation.

analyzed to great depth. As Shinberg said, "There is intentionality in every element; everything received considerable discussion and tinkering."

As at DC Prep, the heart of Two Rivers is a staircase within an atrium space, but here the stair widens and morphs to become a small indoor amphitheater. The classrooms and support spaces around the perimeter have generous amounts of glass—both to the outside and into the central space—reflecting the school's outward focus. In "expeditionary learning," students venture out into the community and city for direct learning experiences, or experts or leaders come to the school to lead discussions. Either way, transparency is called for, and the design succeeds in providing it. Appropriately, the school was selected to appear in a bank commercial with the tagline "Boundaries can be broken."

## An Educational Franchise

Two Rivers is, by design, a community-based school, with about 375 students and topping out at eighth grade. At the other end of the charter school spectrum is KIPP, the Knowledge is Power Program, which has over 16,000 students in 65 schools in 19 states, covering grades from pre-kindergarten to high school. KIPP's DC franchise aspires to have ten schools and 3,000 students.

A big step in that direction will occur this fall, when **Studio27 Architecture** completes the adaptation of the former Douglass Junior High School into the KIPP DC: AIM Academy. Douglass is a large, modernist building in Southeast DC built in 1950 as a segregated, "Colored" school. According to the architects, the school had no systems upgrades and only minimal maintenance for its first 58 years.

The project posed several major challenges. Most notably, the single school building would actually house three different KIPP programs ("campuses," as KIPP calls them), for students in levels ranging from "early learning" (pre-kindergarten) to 12th grade. Also, according to the lease agreement with the DC Public Schools, the renovations would have to be LEED certified. Finally, everyone agreed that the rather utilitarian architecture needed aesthetic upgrades, and, of course, the budget was limited.

At the time that Studio27 became involved with the project, KIPP officials thought that an additional wing would be necessary to house the needed classrooms. The architects demonstrated, however, that the school's needs could be accomplished without the addition, thereby significantly alleviating budget concerns. In the same spirit of cost-effectiveness, new exterior sunscreens and increased amounts of glass simultaneously spice up the exterior aesthetic and earn points toward LEED certification. Other specific "green" elements include zone-controlled ventilation systems, multiple-control lighting, and two bio-retention ponds that filter all the facility's stormwater. Window replacement and substantial roof insulation improved thermal performance enough that it proved unnecessary to add insulation to the thick masonry walls, which would have been difficult and costly.



Interior rendering of the KIPP DC school.

Courtesy of Studio27 Architecture

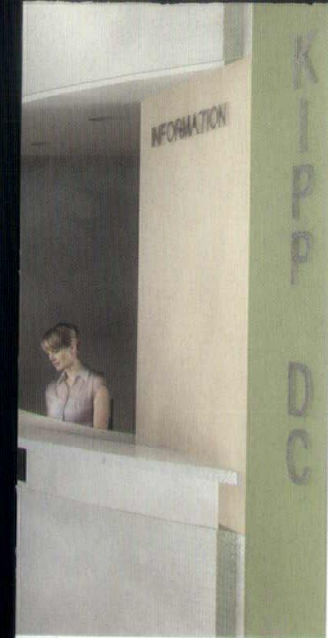


Rendering of the drop-off area at KIPP DC.

Courtesy of Studio27 Architecture

Another feature of the renovation that indirectly makes the project "greener" is its highly adaptable floor plan, which will minimize waste in the future. "Because KIPP is growing so rapidly, by the time this school is finished, the students may be different than what we planned for," said Studio27 principal-in-charge **John Burke, AIA**. "The program had to be flexible, or KIPP would be rearranging walls every few years."

The architects used every opportunity to achieve significant visual bang for the school's buck. The building already had several vertical elements in the form of stair towers that visually offset the horizontal classroom wings, but these towers were windowless with solid doors at the bottom. By adding a vertical strip of windows, doors with glass panels, and translucent canopies, the architects transformed the towers into welcoming gestures that mark the entrances to the different academies. The central lobby



Exterior rendering of the KIPP DC school.

Courtesy of Studio27 Architecture

is the one entirely new element, and it uses a similar vocabulary, albeit much heavier on the glazing.

## Something for Everyone

Unlike charter schools, which can specialize to a great extent, traditional public schools must provide for all. At the other end of the architectural spectrum from the warehouse charter schools, **Quinn Evans | Architects** is providing something for everyone at H.D. Cooke Elementary, a DC public school in Adams Morgan.

The older portions of the school, dating from 1909 and 1921, are being restored inside and out, pleasing preservationists and providing the contemporary school with a bridge to its past. A 1960 wing is being rehabilitated to maintain its usefulness

while helping it become a harmonious part of the whole, and a new addition—with gymnasium, loading, and circulation spaces—adds something fresh to the facility. The completed building will be fully accessible to people with disabilities, no small feat given that the 1960 addition is a half-floor off from the original buildings. And all of this is being done to LEED Silver certification.

Quinn Evans principal-in-charge **Jeffrey Luker, AIA**, used the word “exhausted” to describe the condition of the facility prior to the renovation. Decades of deferred maintenance and a few unfortunate renovations had taken their toll on the building. As Luker phrased it, Quinn Evans’ approach was “to restore quality wherever it existed, and to create new quality where it did not.”



Rendering of the renovated H.D. Cooke Elementary School.

Courtesy of Quinn Evans | Architect

In this, Luker found an ally in the client, the Office of Public Education Facilities Management (OPEFM), which is led by Allen Lew. "They are demanding, but they really understand the design and construction process," Luker noted. "Whenever we've had a chance at quality, he [Lew] has said, 'Yes.'"

Examples at H.D. Cooke are numerous. The original auditorium (future media center) had a large skylight that had been removed long ago and covered over; OPEFM understood the value of re-creating it, to bring natural light to the focal, historic space. OPEFM also agreed that the additional cost to provide terrazzo flooring, rather than vinyl tile, for instance, made sense, given its durability and low maintenance requirements. Most significantly, OPEFM agreed, proactively, to some \$200,000-300,000 in upgrades so the building could be among the first schools in the country to receive a Silver rating under the LEED for Schools system.

H.D. Cooke is on track to reopen in Fall 2009. All indications are that it will be an instant source of neighborhood pride, marking an impressive reversal of fortune. 🏡

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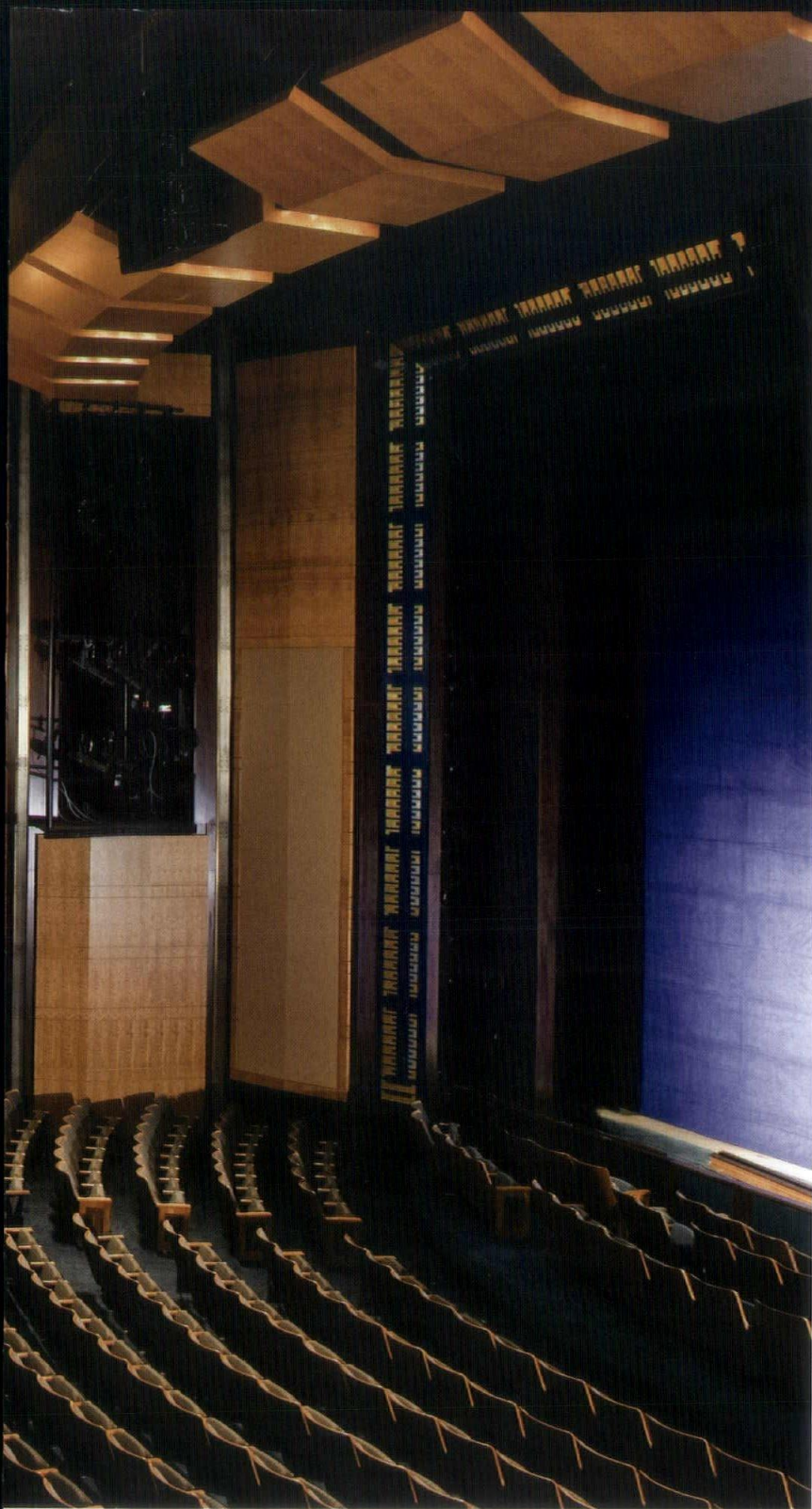


The Eisenhower Theater at the Kennedy Center after renovation

# Scene Change:

Renovated Eisenhower Theater  
Opens at the Kennedy Center

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA



Ron Blunt Photography

Sometimes good things come in garish packages. So it is with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The building itself, designed by Edward Durrell Stone and opened in 1971, is widely lamented as a bombastic marble box surrounded by spindly columns painted to look like ten-karat gold. Yet within this ungainly container, several of Washington's most respected arts organizations—along with various visiting groups—regularly offer high-quality musical and theatrical productions that have made the complex a centerpiece of the city's cultural life.

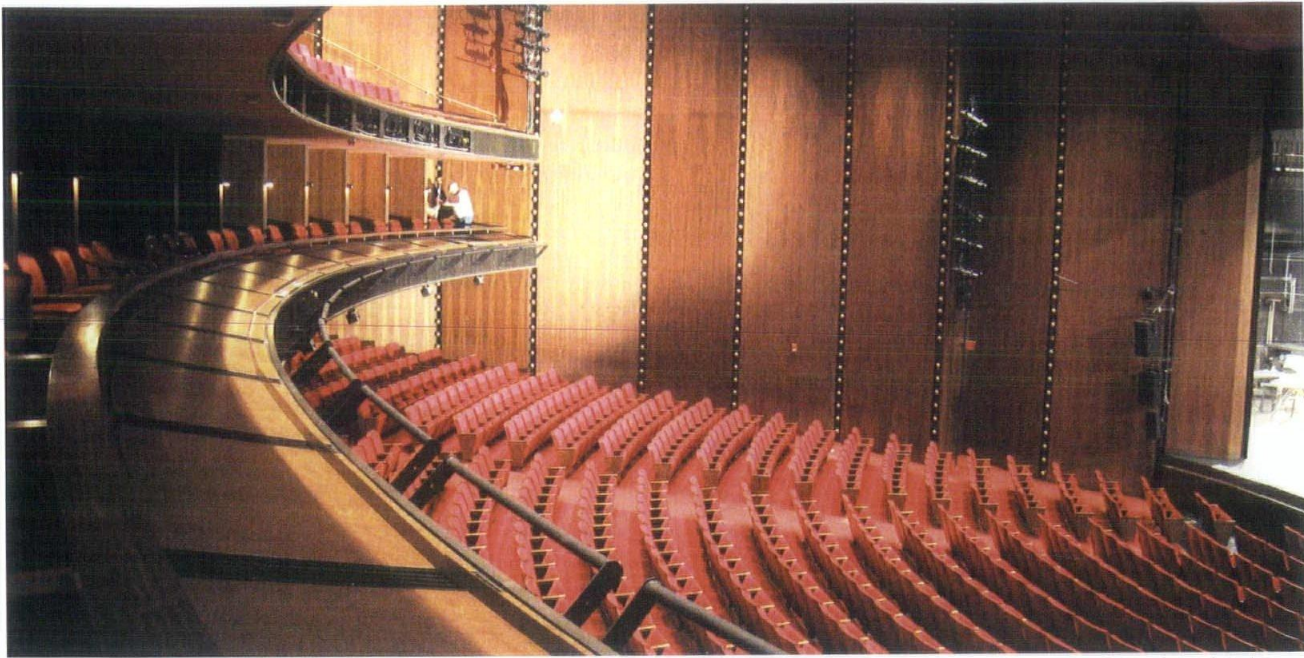
The external appearance of the Kennedy Center is unlikely to change anytime soon, but fortunately the institution's managers have been gradually revamping key interior spaces over the past couple of decades. The 2,442-seat Concert Hall was renovated in the 1990s, and a refurbishment of the 2,300-seat Opera House was completed in 2003. The most recent project was the renovation of the Eisenhower Theater, the smallest of the center's three primary venues, with about 1,100 seats, which reopened this past October.

The Kennedy Center selected **Quinn Evans | Architects** to oversee the Eisenhower Theater project, a logical choice given that the same firm had already handled the renovations of the Opera House and, in cooperation with Hartman-Cox Architects, the Concert Hall. "Our marching orders for all three theaters were pretty much the same," said Quinn Evans senior principal **Larry Barr, AIA**. "Improve accessibility, upgrade the spaces to meet current life safety standards, and address technical theater issues like acoustics, lighting, and ventilation."

The design goals for the three renovation projects may have been similar, but the results are quite different. At the behest of Plácido Domingo, general director of the Washington National Opera, the appearance of the Opera House actually changed very little despite significant technical upgrades. In the Concert Hall, home of the National Symphony Orchestra, the architects added a dramatic new acoustical canopy and made improvements to the layout and finishes of the auditorium, but the space retained much of its original architectural character. By contrast, the Eisenhower Theater, which is used primarily for dramatic productions and, unlike the other two major halls, has no resident company, feels completely new, its design marking a significant departure from the prevailing aesthetics of the Kennedy Center.

## Working within Tight Constraints

The architects at Quinn Evans were accustomed to working within the tight physical constraints of the Kennedy Center, where all of the main theaters are hemmed in by other spaces or exterior walls, but the Eisenhower Theater posed extraordinary design challenges thanks to its relatively small size. "There wasn't much breathing room," said Barr. "We had to create spaces for visitors in wheelchairs and make the whole auditorium more accessible without reducing the overall number of seats." In other words, for every seat that was removed to make way for a more manageable ramp or improved sight lines, another one



The Eisenhower Theater before renovation.

Courtesy of Quinn Evans | Architects

had to be added somewhere else—a tall order given that the theater's overall dimensions were fixed.

The design team concluded that the only solution was to gut the auditorium and reconfigure it in both plan and cross-section. They altered the slopes of the seating and circulation areas, added a transverse aisle mid-way across the main level, and then made up for the displaced seats by filling in the rear aisle. Concerned that these necessary changes would undermine the intimacy of the existing theater space, the architects reshaped the balconies, bringing the edges of the tiers closer to the stage. Conversely, the edge of the formerly-curved stage was straightened, thereby solving various technical staging problems while allowing more seats to be placed closer to the performers.

## Theater as Living Room

While bringing the Eisenhower into conformance with contemporary safety and accessibility standards was the renovation's primary purpose, the project also allowed for a much-needed makeover of the worn and dated space. The existing theater was quite somber, with deep red upholstery and dark wood accents, and there was little to distinguish it aesthetically from its larger siblings. Since the auditorium had to be gutted anyway, Quinn Evans had the opportunity to bring an entirely new look to the nearly 40-year-old hall.

Recent trends in theater design have yielded many venues with loft-like qualities—bare walls, exposed structural and mechanical systems, and moveable seating. These trends reflect a growing interest in extremely flexible staging, and the desire of many artistic directors for spaces that will not distract an audience from the performance. In the case of the Eisenhower Theater, however, such concerns were secondary to a broader interest in optimizing the patron's experience.

"Our goal for the Eisenhower," said Barr succinctly, "was to make it feel like a living room." To that end, the design team chose a serene material palette diverging from the stark red, white, and gold tones that predominate elsewhere in the center. Here, the walls are paneled in honey-colored ash with an intricate but subtle grain pattern, which adds warmth without making the space too dark. Muted blues in the upholstery, carpet, and painted plaster ceiling complement the light wood. Ambient lighting is provided primarily by sconces—simple and subdued in comparison to the original, glitzy fixtures in the building's lobby—stacked in slots along the side walls.

The designers also worked hard to organize all of the stage lights, speakers, and other electronic trappings of modern theaters that otherwise could have cluttered the space. A new catwalk for lighting, for instance, was suspended from the ceiling near the stage and partially camouflaged with panels of the same light wood that lines the walls. Black metal cages at the sides of the stage hold speakers. Invisible channels in the floor and barely-noticeable troughs at the bases of the side walls allow cables to be added or moved easily as needed. Of course, certain productions may require the temporary placement of lighting or other equipment elsewhere in the theater, but in general, the architects succeeded in minimizing technical intrusions into the auditorium.

Although it is strange to think of a space that accommodates 1,100 people as a "living room," the renovated Eisenhower Theater is surprisingly cozy and does indeed feel smaller than it really is. At the same time, thanks to its richly-figured wood walls and the zigzag pattern of the wall panels themselves, the space subtly evokes the exuberant theaters of the Jazz Age. Warm and homey, yet stately and vibrant, the rejuvenated Eisenhower Theater brings a welcome new personality to one of Washington's cultural landmarks. 🏛️



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# Old School (New Housing):

## Historic Building Becomes Center of Condo Complex

by Steven K. Dickens, AIA

The residential development known as the Parker Flats at the Gage School, according to **David Haresign, AIA, of Bonstra | Haresign Architects**, is really four projects in one. The centerpiece is the elaborate restoration and adaptive reuse of the historic Gage School building, incorporating a few small additions. Then there are two entirely new buildings that occupy portions of the former school grounds: a condominium building at the corner of 2nd and V Streets, NW, and “Flagler Place,” a group of row house-style condominiums at the rear of the original school. These three buildings face the fourth component, a landscaped courtyard sitting atop a two-level parking garage.

The story of the complex starts in 1904, when the DC government commissioned architect Lemuel Harris to design a school at the edge of the established LeDroit Park neighborhood, within the then-rapidly-developing Bloomingdale area. Harris produced one of the more geometrically rigorous buildings in the city—a perfect square in plan divided into a modified nine-square arrangement, with a series of spaces that pinwheel around a center space. There were separate entrances and stairwells for boys and girls, and all classrooms had abundant natural light and fresh air. A smaller pavilion containing two classrooms per floor was added in 1908, with a “hyphen” corridor connecting it to the original building.

By 2004, when the site was acquired by Urban Realty Advisors for redevelopment, the school had been abandoned for some three decades. The DC Historic Preservation Office was already working on a landmark nomination for the school (which was eventually successful), in part to be able to enforce laws against “demolition by neglect.” A huge hole in the roof, clearly visible in satellite photos of the time, revealed the substantial dereliction.

The redevelopment of the site was multifaceted, reflecting a mix of painstaking restoration, simple preservation, and addition of new elements, some of which are clearly expressed and celebrated while others are downplayed. First and foremost, the original building’s exterior was carefully restored by Bonstra | Haresign with consultation from the firm of **Oehrlein & Associates Architects**, known for preservation expertise. Missing metal cornices were re-created, and the large, wood, double-hung windows were replaced. In a modest departure from the original exterior appearance, low-profile dormer windows were inserted along the roof, allowing the former attic to become a bona fide third story. Modern plumbing and air-handling vents, which could have seriously compromised the integrity of the restored roof, were routed to a re-created cupola whose louvers hide them from view.

Inside the magnificent doors of the original building, full-fledged restoration gives way to a more basic preservation aesthetic mixed with new architectural expression. The load-bearing brick walls, for instance, are expressed as just that: what little plaster remained prior to renovations was removed. The rotted ceilings and their mostly-destroyed



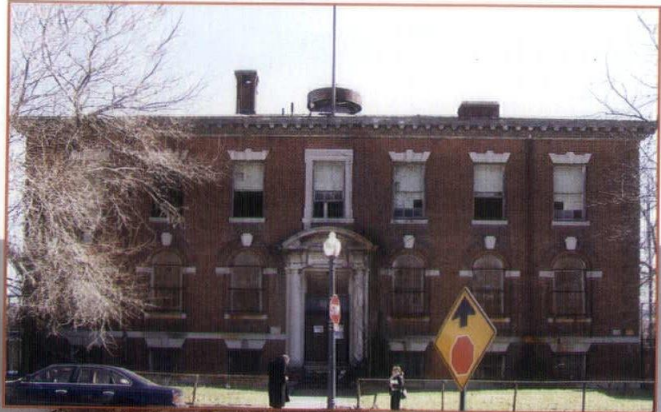
An apartment interior in the former Gage School.

Exterior of the Gage School after renovation.



Photo by Anice Hoachlander, © Hoachlander Davis Photography, LLC

Exterior of the school before renovation.



Courtesy of Bonstra | Haresign Architects

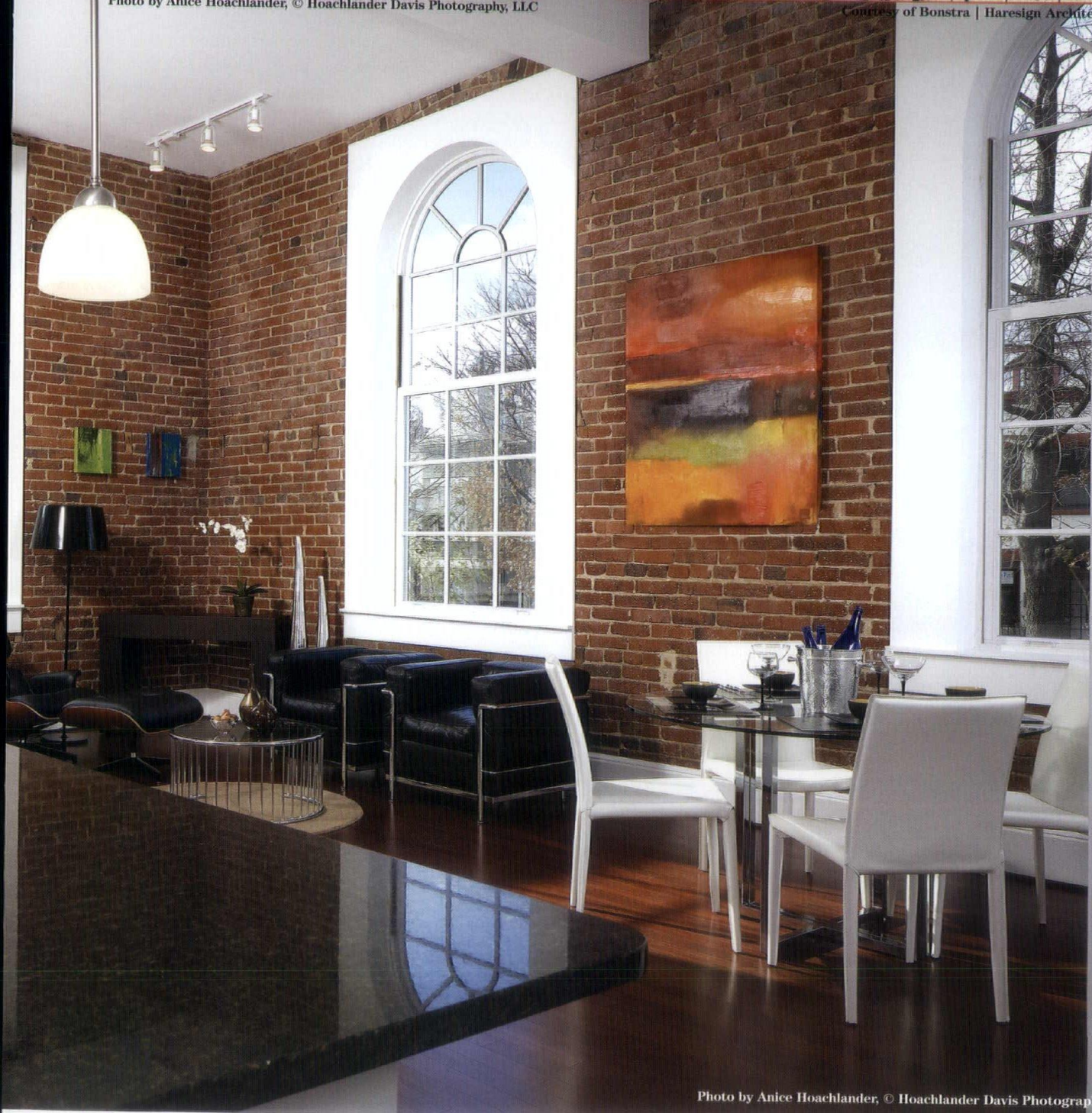
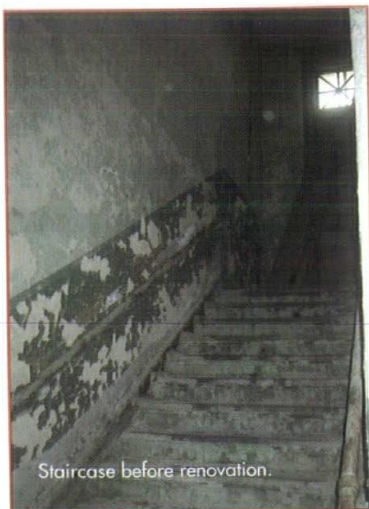


Photo by Anice Hoachlander, © Hoachlander Davis Photography, LLC



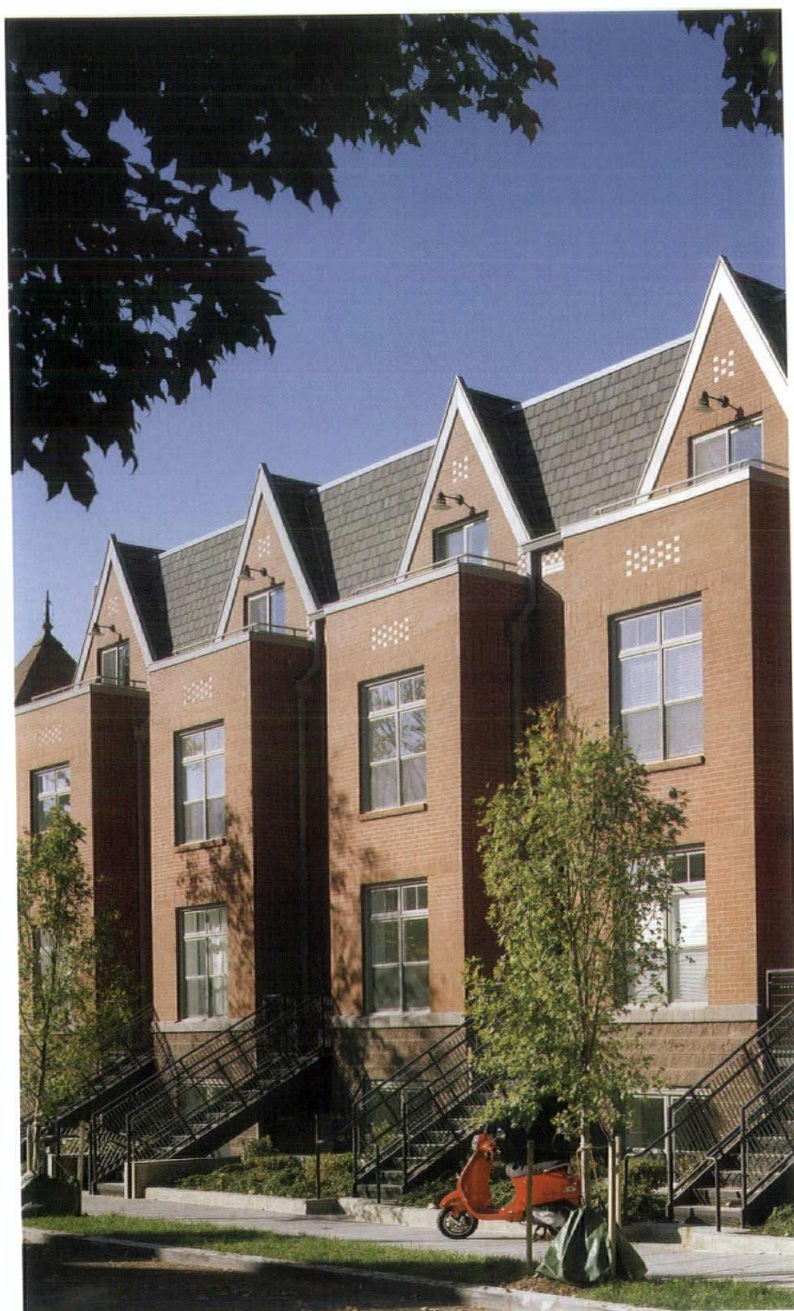
Staircase before renovation.

Courtesy of  
Bonstra | Haresign Architects



Staircase after renovation.

Photo by Anice Hoachlander,  
© Hoachlander Davis Photography, LLC



The new Flagler Place building.

Photo by Anice Hoachlander,  
© Hoachlander Davis Photography, LLC

cornices likewise were not restored—in their place is a taut drywall ceiling with recessed light fixtures in a modern grid. And the flooring, which was also badly deteriorated, was replaced with stylish grey slate and carpeting.

The corners of the central lobby space have been given over to white millwork “phone booths,” as Haresign calls them, which serve as foyers for the condominium units. Similarly, the corridor to the “hyphen” connecting the 1904 and 1908 portions of the building was narrowed to allow more space for the adjacent apartments, while the hyphen itself was broadened to accommodate an elevator and a second stairwell. The primary stair is the highly decorative cast iron former boys’ stair, which—in contrast to its raw brick enclosure walls—was meticulously restored using parts from the dismantled girls’ stair. The extension of this cast iron stair up to the new third floor is, however, clearly different and modern while maintaining a complementary, painted metal aesthetic.

Within the units, the dialogue between old and new continues. The massive windows—replicas of the originals, except with modern, double-insulated glazing—dominate, and exposed brick walls are focal. Ductwork is exposed, and the floors, ceilings, lighting, and kitchens are also obviously new and therefore modern in expression.

The buildings at 2nd and V and at Flagler Place, although entirely new, display a version of the same dialogue. At first glance, the facades appear to be an exercise in neighborly, well-executed contextualism, with obvious nods to such features as the turreted towers that are common among row houses in Bloomingdale. On Flagler Place, though, the new building needed to be three full stories in order to maximize sellable space, which could have rendered the new structure out of scale with the predominantly two-story row houses in the area. The architects’ solution was to create a series of gables within a mansard roof. The gables provide the rhythm of pointed elements at approximately the same height as the neighboring buildings’ turrets, while the mansard allows for the full third story.

All of these moves help the development to fit easily within its historic context without sacrificing all-important square footage. In initial feasibility studies, based solely on satellite images and scant public records, the architects projected that 78 units could be accommodated. But as the project developed, they found space—in the attic and basement, mostly—for 12 additional units. “Any time we can squeeze out additional revenue for the client, some of that revenue can invest in the project as better design work,” commented Haresign. In other words, doing well for the client can mean doing well for the architecture.

Overall, the Gage School complex is reminiscent of a collegiate quadrangle, with buildings that are simultaneously distinct and complementary. “The old school building,” said Haresign, “has the big leading role. The other buildings are supporting actors in this play.” The production obviously turned out quite well, since the complex won a 2008 Washingtonian Residential Design Award (see the Summer 2008 issue of *ARCHITECTURE DC*) and, more important, has played a key catalytic role in the revitalization of the neighborhood. 🏡

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Photo by Balodemas Architects

Left: Interior of second floor bedroom of Rozen-Nguyen Residence. Above: Rozen-Nguyen Residence before renovation.

# Smart Design at Home

## Four New Home Renovations and Additions by DC-Area Architects

by Ronald O'Rourke

Home renovation and addition projects have been a cornerstone of the local architectural scene for a long time, but the project type still offers plenty of opportunity for design work that is innovative, beautiful, functional, and economical. Four recent projects designed by three DC-area architectural firms are cases in point.

### Rozen-Nguyen Residence

The Rozen-Nguyen Residence, located in the Somerset part of Chevy Chase, Maryland, was originally built in 1949 as a ranch-style house—a common house type in the DC area, and a classic candidate

for a renovation and addition. To transform their aging residence, the owners hired the DC firm of **Balodemas Architects**. Firm principal **Louis Balodemas, AIA**, and **Patrick Haggerty** were the architects for the project.

The overall goal was to give the home a modern and open character, while keeping costs under control. “The owners lived in the house for ten years before this [project began], and they were ready for a big change,” said Balodemas. “They wanted it to look a lot different inside and out, but of course everything was budget-driven. So the challenge was to do enough to the house to change it, but don’t do so much that it pushes it past the budget.”



Exterior of Rozen-Nguyen Residence.

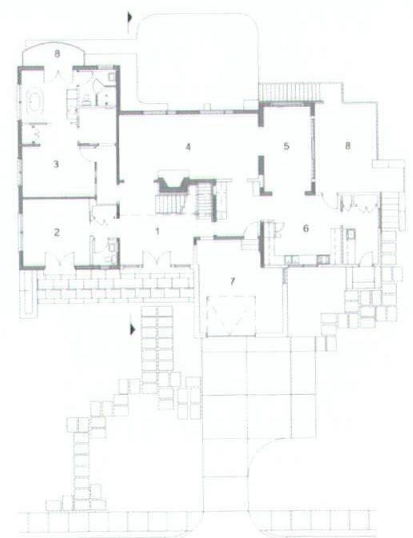


Photo by Anice Hoachlander,  
© Hoachlander Davis Photography, LLC

The project completely renovated both the interior and exterior of the home, and added a total of 1,500 square feet of space.

"The plan is organized around a new central foyer [that is] transparent to the street," said Balodemas. "Children's bedrooms were moved upstairs, allowing for a larger master suite on the first floor. The new second floor spaces were held to the front of the house, [and] tucked under a more steeply sloped roof. This raised the profile of the house along the street while maintaining sunlight to the rear patio. A series of new terraces, decks and balconies were arranged to give each living area access to outdoor space."

To keep costs under control, the design relied almost entirely on standard materials and construction methods. "The only [non-standard material] we had on this job was the Kalwall," said Balodemas, referring to a brand of fiberglass translucent wall panels that have long been used in commercial building projects. The panels admit a beautifully soft and serene light into interior spaces while preserving occupant privacy and screening unwanted views.

The owners, Balodemas said, are pleased not only with the results, but also with how the project was executed. "They think the job went quicker having an architect," he said. "They thought the planning part was faster, and they felt that the contractor and I worked well enough together. That helped—we didn't run into any problems during construction. [But] a lot of credit goes to the owners, because they made decisions [about project details] and stuck with them."

Although Balodemas' design radically transformed the house, it did so in a way that responded to neighborhood concerns. The residents of Somerset, Balodemas said, "have been following the mansionization regulations closely, and are very sensitive to things being done too big one next to the other. The comments I've gotten have been very positive—that the overall result was sensitive to the neighbors, especially the immediate neighbors, and [that] it feels like it belongs in the neighborhood, even though it's a different character than the other houses."

"Through construction," he added, "I kept getting a lot of comments like, 'what's that wall going up?' Because you couldn't tell how it was going to turn out—it looked kind of odd during construction. But it was nice to get the feedback at the end of the job that most people liked it."

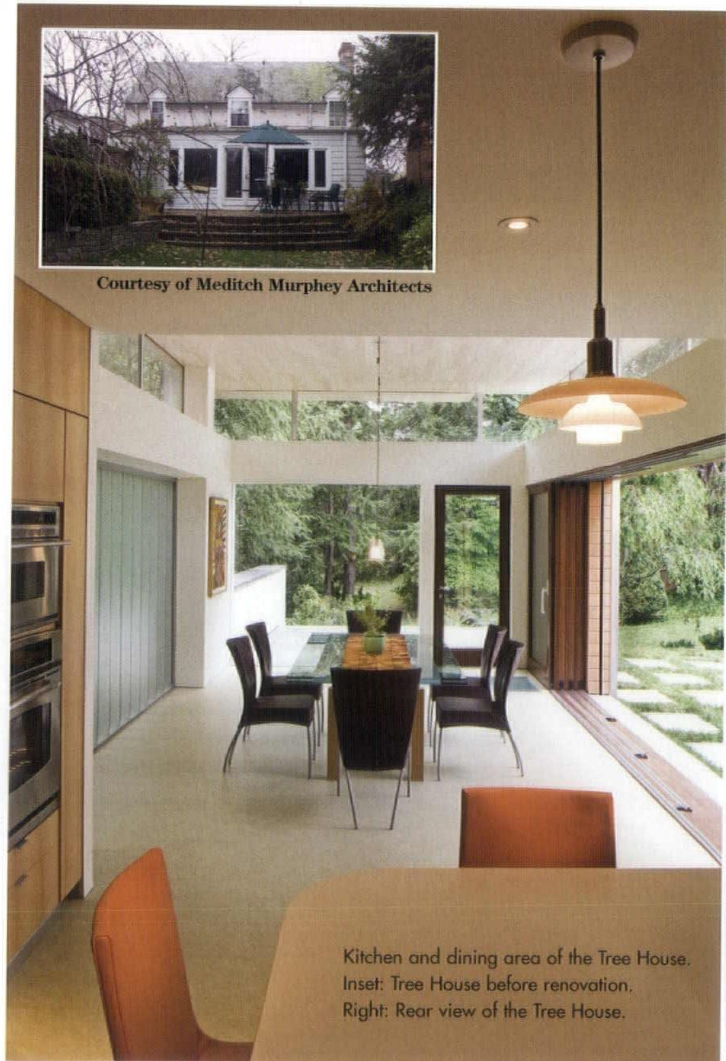
## Tree House

Not too far from the Rozen-Nguyen residence is Tree House, a project that renovated and added new space to another iconic house type in the DC area—the center-hall Colonial. The owners hired the Chevy Chase firm of **Meditch Murphey Architects** to design the renovation and addition. The architects for the project were firm principal **John Dennis Murphey, AIA**, and **Brian Berger, AIA**.

One of the main goals of the project was to better integrate the home with a nicely wooded area at the rear of property. "They had



Courtesy of Meditch Murphey Architects



Kitchen and dining area of the Tree House.  
Inset: Tree House before renovation.  
Right: Rear view of the Tree House.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie



Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie

a beautiful back yard, and this kind of dopey box [of a house] that didn't take advantage of it—you wouldn't even know the trees were there," Murphey said. "We wanted to pull the back yard right through the house and tight up to the front door. And this idea ended up running the show—it ordered everything."

To achieve this, "We got rid of the stair, which is normally [in the center], and hooked it around to the back of one side of the addition," Murphey explained. "I wanted a full, six-foot-wide corridor to go right from [the front door] to the back of the original house. The moment you open the door, I wanted everyone to be able to know, 'oh, wow, there's this cool new universe back here.'"

At the far end of the hall is a new dining room with a telescoping wall that opens up completely to the back yard. The outdoor area is further defined—and gently illuminated at night—by a converted garage structure.

The owners "are big partiers, and the house parties well," Murphey said. "That was one of the ideas [for the design]—all those doors open up, and people fill that back yard. And that little garage is not a garage anymore—it's just basically a very large light fixture. We put Kalwall [translucent panels] on one side, and two big lights in there." Murphey also used Kallwall panels to bring light into the home's relocated stairwell.

The insertion of the new center hall created a series of long and thin living spaces on either side of the home—an arrangement that Murphey questioned at first. In the end, though, "that's what I like most about [the project]," he said. "Because you almost feel like if you're in a chair or in your bedroom, if you move just a couple of inches one way or another, you can touch the wall, you can open a window—you almost feel like you're in a tree house of your childhood. And that's why I call it the Tree House—you're so close to nature."

Another goal of the design was to manage the home's relationship to the neighboring homes on either side. "We had neighbors right next door, and we were kind of broadsiding them with this long space, [so] on one side of the home we used channel glass," Murphey said. "It has a sort of Japanese, shoji-screen feeling—you get the light, but you don't get the view. And then we had a magnolia tree green screen on the other side to control the views the other way."

Yet another device Murphey used for managing the home's proximity to its neighbors is a "borrowed view"—a concept, he explained, that is found in Chinese architecture.

"The first floor addition was 10-foot-6 in height, which is good, but [at] the top two feet, we had this clerestory [window] go all the way around," Murphey said. "So when you're in this room, even though you have neighbors barbecuing right next door, you look up at an angle and you think you're out in Montana. You have no idea you're in the city, because you see big, puffy clouds floating around. And that's just borrowed view."

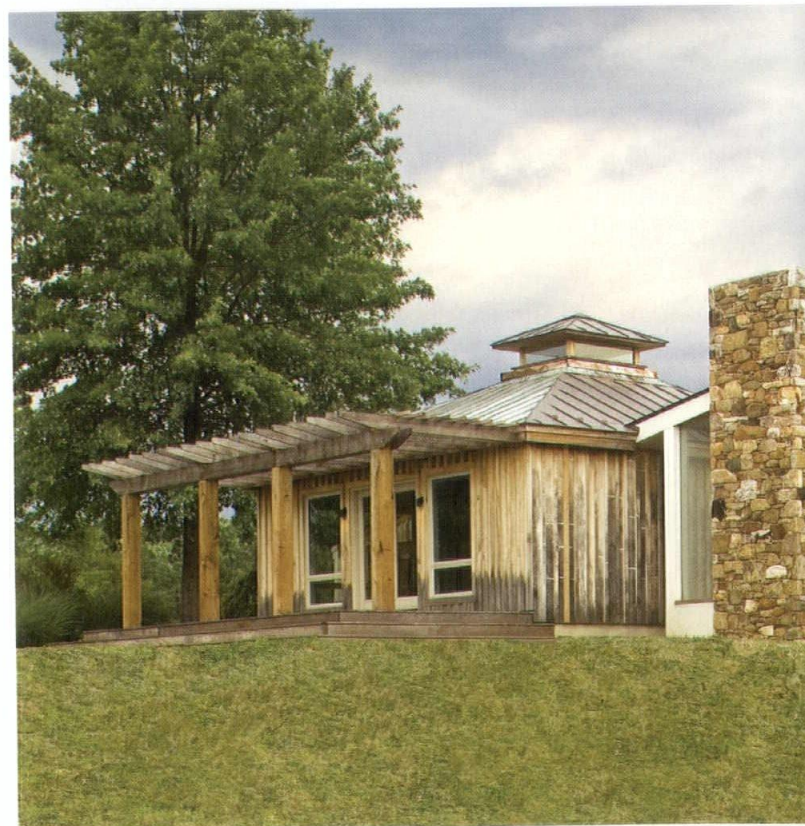
Murphey created controlled views in other parts of the project as well. "On the second floor, there are little windows right at pillow height. So it's right where you want the view [to be] when you wake up. And the back of the bedroom has no visual clutter added—the end of it is just all green."

A renovation, Murphey said, "has to do more than just solve the spatial problem. It has to give you a lift every time you return to it. You gotta go, 'oh, man, am I glad I am here!'" Murphey believes the project passes this test.



The new living room at the Rural Infill house.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie



View of the Rural Infill project following renovation, with the addition in the center.



The existing structures before renovation.

Courtesy of Meditch Murphey Architects



Exterior of the Rural Infill house.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie

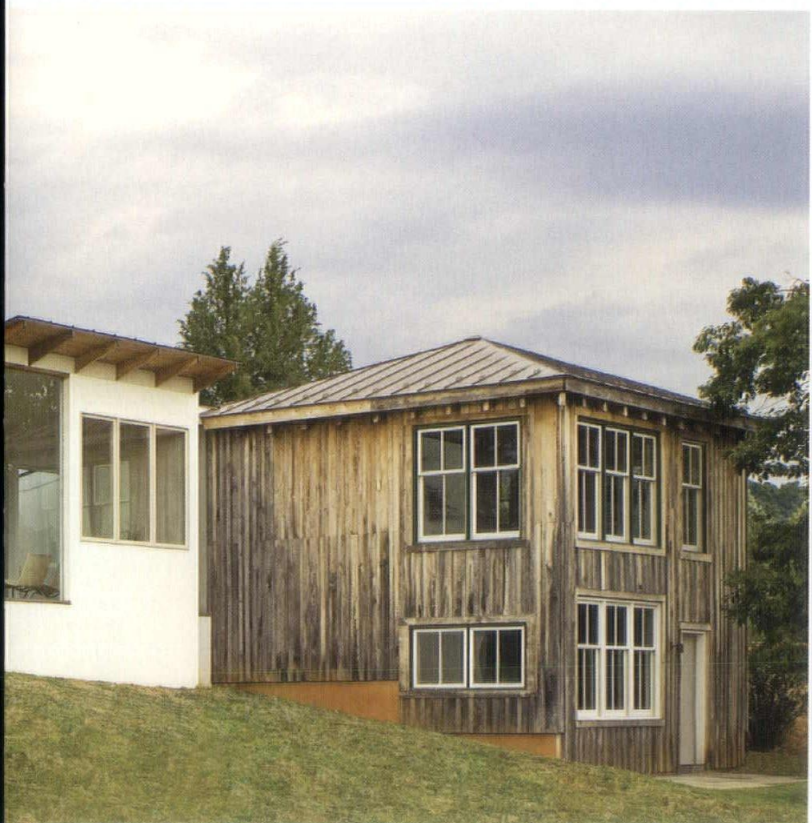


Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie

"I think the client said it best: 'This place is just a fun place to be.'"

## Rural Infill

Another renovation and addition presented **Meditch Murphey Architects** with a very different design challenge. This second project is located in a rural setting in Little Washington, Virginia, and involved the task of designing an addition that would fill in the gap between two existing, barn-like buildings. Hence the project's name—Rural Infill. The architects for the project included **John Dennis Murphey, AIA, Marcie Meditch, AIA, and Jana Vander Goot.**

The two existing, cedar-clad buildings were in poor condition, and knitting them together with an addition was not the clients' original concept. "The clients originally asked us to tear [the buildings] down—each one had one foot in the grave," Murphey said. "There were no mechanical systems and the windows needed replacing. On windy days gusts of air would puff right through the walls. But I just hung around out there for a while. And in the end, I really liked those buildings." So he decided that "we're going to hang our hat on these buildings."

Murphey's approach made good economic sense. "By reusing [the two existing buildings], we almost doubled what we could have done if we had torn down and built new." The strategy also presented advantages in terms of sustainable design. "We recycled two whole buildings—that's the best you can do."

Having decided on the infill approach, Murphey turned to the task of designing an addition that would unite two older buildings that differed from one another in their rooflines and other details.

"How do you work with this rambunctious jumble? You've got one little barn, two little barns, and then [you're adding] a third [structure]—another shape—and how do you resolve it aesthetically? That was the challenge," Murphey said. Specific issues to resolve included floors that didn't align and "how do you drain the water off all those crazy roofs?"

Murphey's solution was to add a small, shed-like space to the side of one barn, and then connect that new space, which became the living room, to the other barn with a glass-sided passageway. The result in plan is an arrangement that transforms two vaguely related buildings into a single, integrated residence with a graceful and rationally ordered progression of spaces that suggests it was designed that way from scratch.

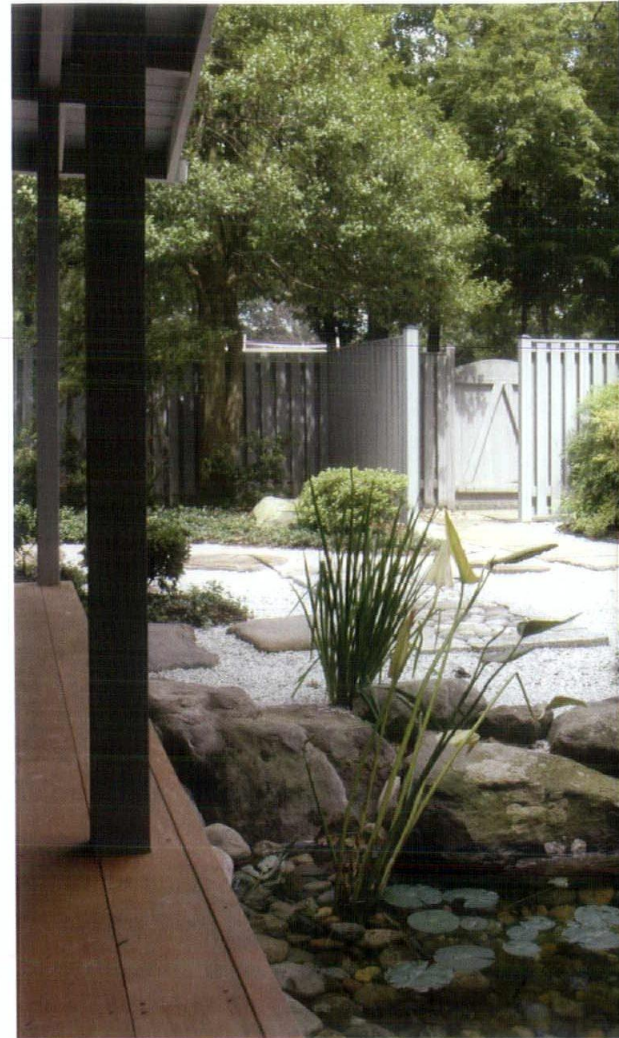
A key design question, as in many addition projects, was whether to have the addition match the existing exterior design aesthetic, or stand in contrast to it. Murphey opted for the latter approach, and designed the new space as a structure clad in glass and white stucco—a "little sugar cube," as he calls it.

"The best way to offset those [existing] buildings, to really make them look good," Murphey explained, "would be to put a white background behind [them]—kind of like [what the photographer Richard] Avedon does. Or like in a museum—any kind of funky piece of furniture looks so much better if it's [presented] a little bit out of context in a neutral background."



Kitchen of the Goldstein Residence.

Photo by Shinberg.Levinas



Garden of the Goldstein Residence.

Photo by Shinberg.Levinas



Living room of the Goldstein Residence.

Photo by Timothy Bell



New glass corner in the Goldstein Residence.

Photo by Timothy Bell

So these buildings actually look quite, I think, noble [against the] just plain white that was our background," he added.

"The final resolution," he said, "was a real sharp contrast between old and new, and I kind of liked that."

## Goldstein Residence

Although many renovation and addition projects are aimed at correcting a house's design problems, some are undertaken with an eye toward preserving and enhancing the well-done work of an earlier architect. That was the case with the Goldstein residence of Bethesda, Maryland. The house was built in 1960 to a design by the DC architecture firm of Keyes, Lethbridge and Condon, which was well known at the time for its modern residential work. The current owners, who purchased the property in 1993, hired the Bethesda firm of **Shinberg, Levinas Architectural Design** to design the renovation and addition. The lead architect for the project was firm principal **Salo Levinas, Assoc. AIA.**

"This house was named one of the 20 most significant houses by *Architectural Record* in 1961," explained Levinas. "It was created by the National Lumber Manufacturers Association, and constructed by an association of lumbermen. Its construction displayed the many possibilities of hardwood construction, in response to the linoleum, Formica, aluminum siding, [and] carpet that were gaining popularity at the time."

The owners wanted to honor and improve upon the house's original design—a goal with which Levinas agreed. "In this case, we wanted to maintain the core and the soul of house. We just tried to improve it."

"The original house was kind of a showcase for the wood industry," Levinas said. "So we kept the idea of showing the different woods."

"One of the beautiful things [about the house]," he said, "is the way that the original architect did the floor plan. It's a very contemporary [design] from the '50s. It is very frank, and very interesting—there are just two axes in the whole house, and this is what we tried to regain and [enhance]."

"While the house harmonized nicely with the landscape, the new owners wanted to create more interaction between inside and outside," Levinas said. To help with that goal, Levinas brought in Shinichiro Abe of the Boston landscaping firm Zen Associates to create a contemporary Zen garden.

The most significant change, Levinas said, was the replacement of walls in the living room with floor-to-ceiling windows. As a result, Levinas said, "The wood of the original house is bathed in new sunlight." In addition, "the new garden was merged with the interior by installing strategically placed windows and playfully placing rocks on both the interior and exterior of the windows."

Other features of the design include new wood in the form of an undulating "mahogany curtain" in the hallway leading to the master bedroom, and a new pergola that "seems to float in front of the pool house—its wood mimics both the Japanese sensibility as well as the wood theme in the main house."

The owners could not afford to do the entire project at once, so the project was divided into phases and accomplished over a period of several years. "We did a master plan to have an [overall] idea of what we wanted to do," Levinas said. "And after that, each year, we took a little piece [to do]." As each step in the project was implemented, he said, certain details of the remaining steps changed, but the overall strategy for the project remained intact.

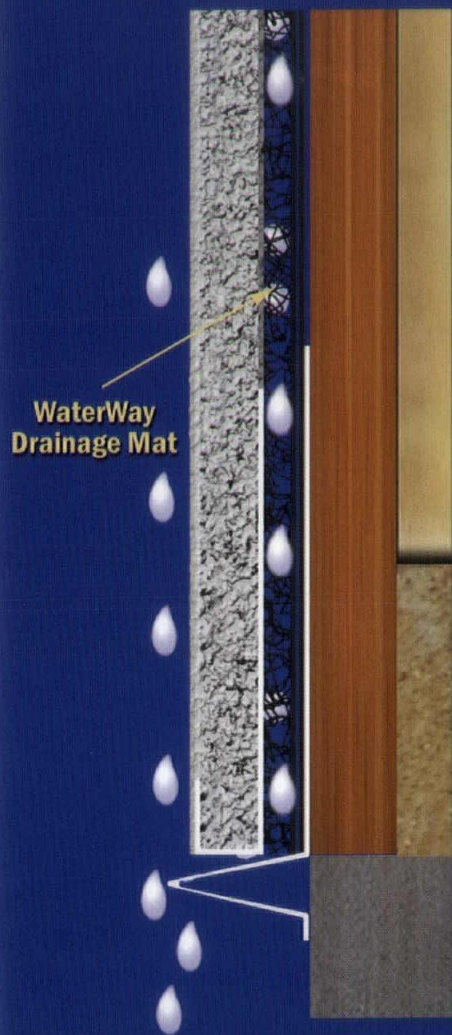
"It was beautiful that we had such a good relationship with the client," Levinas said. "I think [the project] went very well because it had time to mature, and we had time to know better the client and have beautiful interactions between them and us. The client was very involved and we were able to listen and to work with them."

"The owner," he concluded, "has to be open and has to listen for new ideas, and the architect has to be humble enough to listen to the client's requirements and be able to transform those ideas into a real object." ■

# WATERWAY

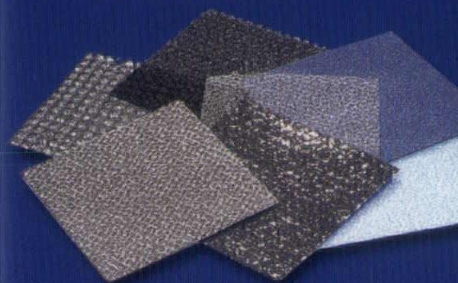
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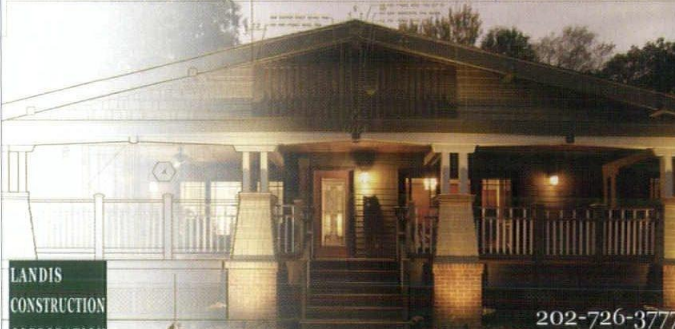
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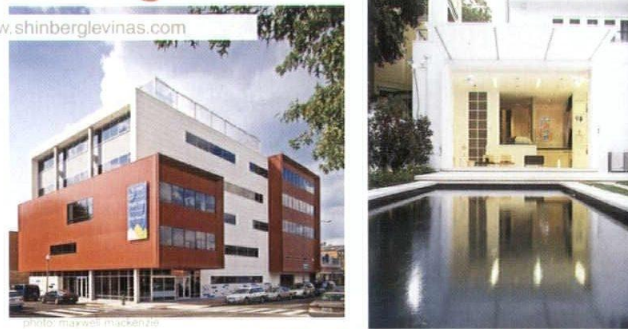
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# Plumb Elegant:

Kitchens and Bathrooms  
Get New Identities

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

Photo by Lydia Cutter Photography

One of the adages of residential real estate is that kitchens and bathrooms sell houses. Perhaps it is because cooking and bathing are such ritualized human activities, or perhaps it is simply because these rooms are typically among the most expensive parts of a house or apartment, and therefore deserve special attention. Whatever the reason, kitchens and bathrooms certainly draw the scrutiny of visitors, whether potential buyers or regular houseguests. For that reason, renovations of those spaces can go a long way toward redefining visitors' impressions of a home.



Photo by Lydia Cutter Photography



Courtesy of Karen Luria



Courtesy of Karen Luria

## Making a Big Splash in a Small Space

A renovated bathroom does not have to be huge to have a dramatic impact. Witness a recent project by interior designer **Karen Luria**, a professional affiliate member of the Washington Chapter/AIA, whose firm is called **Karen Luria Interior Identity Inc.**

The existing bathroom, part of a Chevy Chase, Maryland, apartment owned by a retired attorney, looked as if it had been plucked from a run-of-the-mill business hotel. It was a faux-elegant concoction of off-white marble tile, white fixtures, and brass faucets and knobs, resulting in a sea of blandness. Luria, who was also overseeing a broader renovation of the apartment, said that the client had only one explicit requirement for the bathroom: "Get rid of ALL the marble." Beyond that, Luria had free rein as a designer, and she took full advantage of the opportunity to produce a luxurious and visually stunning space.

Instead of the banal marble, the predominant material is now warmly-colored, richly-textured porcelain tile, which covers the floor and some walls. The mundane vanity has been replaced by a cantilevered cabinet topped with glass and a pair of handmade, white bronze sinks. Most strikingly, in place of the old white bathtub encased in thin marble tiles, there is now a sleekly sculptural basin,

which is filled from a waterfall faucet mounted high on the wall. At first glance, the gleaming tub could easily be mistaken for an elegant public fountain—or perhaps even a holy shrine.

The photos of the finished bathroom might suggest that the project was all about image, but Luria emphasizes that practical considerations were very important. "There is a lot of room for storage," she said, "and many elements of the room serve more than one function." For instance, the low shelving unit to the left of the new vanity doubles as a set of steps, allowing the owner to enter and exit the tall bathtub gracefully.

"I pay extreme attention to detail," said Luria, who even designed the towels for the bathroom. "I try to think of everything."

## Downsizing, then Upgrading

A couple of baby boomers recently sold their DC townhouse and bought an apartment in the Westchester, a venerable building featured in James Goode's book *Best Addresses: A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses*. The move entailed a considerable downsizing for the couple, who hired **Meditch Murphey Architects** to oversee a renovation of the apartment and make the most out of the smaller home.

"The clients wanted an elegant but flexible space," said **Marcie Meditch, AIA**, principal in charge of the project. "Everything had to have multiple functions."

Working with interior designer Lisa Bartolomei, Meditch set out to open up spaces wherever possible, either physically, by breaking through portions of walls, or visually, through the use of mirrors or translucent surfaces. For instance, the entry hall features a translucent "water wall," which not only introduces a calming element to the first space visitors encounter, but also allows light to enter the shower area in the master bathroom, which is on the other side of the wall. Within the bathroom, mirrored medicine cabinets running behind the sinks expand the apparent size of the room. Other material choices—richly-grained marble, glass mosaic tiles, and even translucent sinks—all contribute to a sense of brightness and airiness in what is actually a very modestly sized room.

Similarly, in the custom-built kitchen, which has a galley layout, the design team worked to make the space seem bigger than it is. Opening the wall between the kitchen and the dining room was one obvious but important tactic. Fortunately, the kitchen already had a window, which was nice, but the window had a view of a brick wall, which was not. Worse yet, at the top of the view was an ugly exhaust hood emerging from the brick. The designers cleverly made the most of this situation by suspending a painting in front of the window using thin wires. The painting seems to float magically in mid-air, attracting attention away from the mundane exterior view without sacrificing much light.

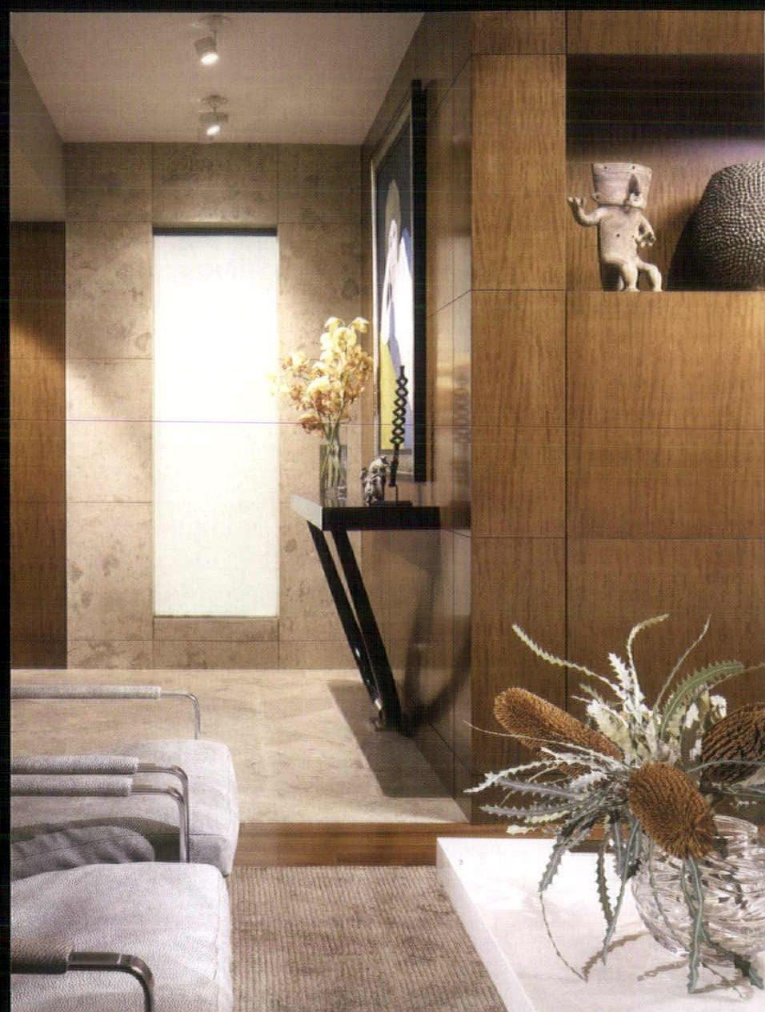
The finished project demonstrates that in a small space, small gestures—like a translucent panel or a cleverly hung painting—can make a big difference.

Left: Renovated bathroom by Karen Luria in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Above: Bathroom with new tub at center and vanity on right.

Above Top Right: Vanity before renovation.

Above Bottom Right: Shower area before renovation.



Entry hall of the Westchester apartment, with the water wall visible at left.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie



Renovated kitchen in the Westchester apartment. Inset: Westchester kitchen before renovation.

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie

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## Expanding on a Modern Classic

Hollin Hills, in Fairfax County, Virginia, is a famous enclave of mid-20th-century houses designed by Charles Goodman. Less well known is the community of Carderock Springs, in Montgomery County, Maryland, which was developed in the 1960s by builder Edmund Bennett with the aid of the prominent Washington architecture firm of Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon. Now on the National Register of Historic Places, the neighborhood is a treasure trove of classic modern houses.

**KUBE architecture** was recently hired to renovate one of the original houses in Carderock Springs for a couple in their 30s with two young children. The main floor of the existing house was essentially one big, square room with the kitchen squeezed into a box in one corner, leaving an awkward, L-shaped area for living and dining. The arrangement also detracted from the space's greatest potential asset—a cathedral ceiling that could not be appreciated because of the intrusion of the enclosed kitchen.

At first, the clients wanted to keep the kitchen where it was and simply open it up to the rest of the space, while adding an eight-foot-wide strip onto the back of the house to expand the living area. Concerned that this approach

failed to address the awkward layout of the living and dining areas, however, KUBE principal **Janet Bloomberg, AIA**, suggested instead moving the kitchen to the addition, thus freeing the main space completely for other functions.

Having decided on that strategy, Bloomberg had to ensure that the kitchen would not become a barrier between the living spaces and the leafy back yard. Her solution was to line the rear wall with an astonishing, linear window. From certain angles in the living space, it appears almost as if there were no separation at all between the kitchen and the outdoors.

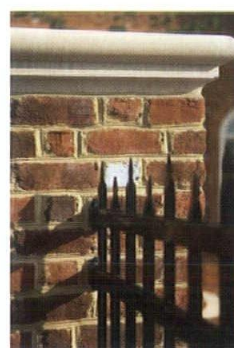
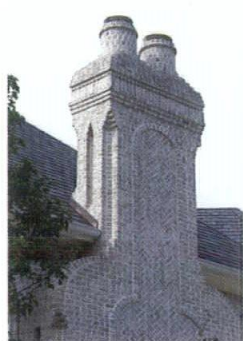
"When people see pictures of that big window running along the kitchen, they'll probably wonder if there's a lack of storage, but in fact, there's lots of storage in the base cabinets and the tall wall of cabinets," said Bloomberg. "We didn't want upper cabinets to ruin the view."

Bloomberg is gracious about giving credit where it is due. "The use of walnut in the kitchen was the client's idea," she noted. "It's very earthy, and it works well with the view of nature through the window. And the wife came up with the idea of using white Caesarstone countertops. I joke that it's a poor man's Carrara marble, but it is beautiful in this setting." 🌿



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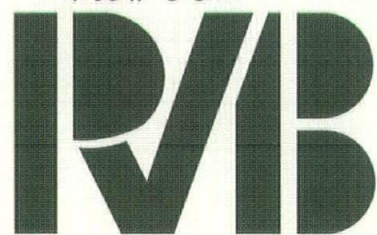
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"After" photos by Les Henig Photography  
 "Before" photos by Robert Reinhardt, AIA



# A New Kind of "Green" Roof

by Sarah Smith

Close-up of Sunslates.  
 Set left: House after  
 installation of Sunslates.  
 Sets right: Views of  
 house before renovation.

**Robert Reinhardt, AIA**, of **Reinhardt Architects**, was initially hired by a Northwest Washington couple simply to expand the attic space of their home into an office. He and his clients were in the thick of the schematic design process when they realized it was possible to incorporate green technology into their renovation. The deteriorating slate shingles on their roof were due for replacement—could solar panels, layered on the south-facing roof of their home, be a realistic alternative?

Reinhardt's clients researched several photovoltaic products before deciding on Sunslates. This product was of special interest to them for its similarity in size and shape to the slate shingles currently lining the rooftops of the homes in their neighborhood. Sunslates would allow them to maintain this aesthetic while generating electricity.

Sunslates, like all solar panels, use the science of photovoltaics to convert light into electricity, a process that is made possible by the absorption of photons. When the photons are absorbed, electrons are released and create a current that can be used as electricity. Sunslates will typically capture enough energy to provide one- to two-thirds of the electricity needed to power a house. The exact amount, of course, depends on the weather, but

on the sunniest summer days, excess electricity will be pumped directly into PEPCO's grid, and Reinhardt's clients will receive a credit on their electric bill. In addition to generating electricity, the Sunslates also generate heat. Under the Sunslates is a solar hot water collection system used to preheat domestic hot water and as a back-up for two forced-air heating systems.

Around the same time that the Sunslates were being incorporated into the renovation, Reinhardt's clients came across a grant program funded by the District of Columbia's Department of the Environment. This program, called the Renewable Energy Demonstration Project, has been supporting green building for four years, and is one reason why DC can proudly call itself a leader in green building initiatives. Applicants to this program may request up to \$9,000 in funding towards the implementation of renewable energy technology in a home.

Reinhardt admitted his joy in influencing green initiatives on many levels with this project: not only has he contributed to the growing number of environmentally conscious building projects, but he has also created a home office that allows his client to keep the car in the garage...even if it is a Prius. ☺

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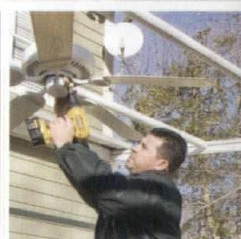
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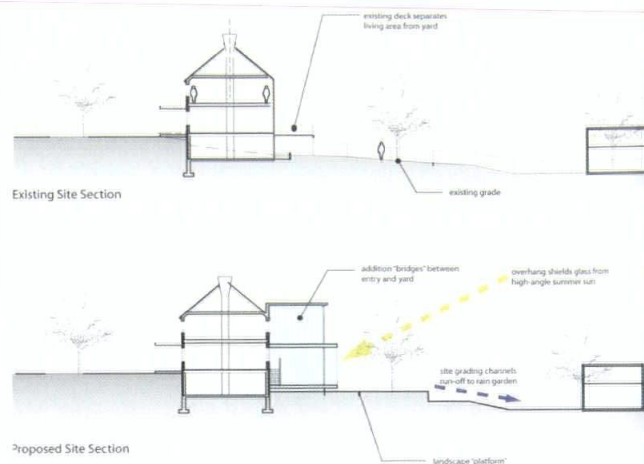
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Rendering of proposed AU Park addition.

Courtesy of Michael Sewell, AIA



Cross-sections of AU Park house before proposed addition (top) and after (bottom).

Courtesy of Michael Sewell, AIA

# Architecture Ahead

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

## AU Park Renovation/Addition

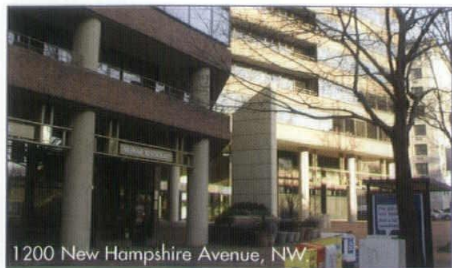
"I have always been intrigued by the idea of working on a small existing house on a big lot," says architect **Michael Sewell, AIA**, "so I could design and build a great, modern addition in the back yard." Sewell is getting his wish with a project involving a compact, brick neo-Colonial in American University Park. Unlike many of the houses in the neighborhood, this one has never been expanded—yet.

The program for the project is hardly unusual—adding a family room and a master bedroom, and reconfiguring the kitchen and other spaces at the rear of the existing house—but Sewell's design solution is anything but typical. The proposed addition consists of two wide, rectangular tubes, the lower one housing the family room and the upper one the master bedroom. The tubes project beyond floor-to-ceiling glass walls, creating upper and lower porches and shielding views into the rooms from neighboring houses. Since the tubes face south, the projections will also shade the glass walls from the sun in

the summer. Sewell is considering adding screens spanning the width of the tubes, so that the glass walls could be opened up for ventilation in pleasant weather.

On the first floor, the addition will step down between the level of the existing house and the level of the yard, which slopes away from the house fairly quickly. "The back yard is deep—about 120 feet—but it slopes about eight or nine feet over that distance," Sewell explained. "I struggled with the question of how to handle the transition from the floor level of the existing house to the level of the yard. A lot of the other houses in the area have these huge family room additions that just hover over the back yard, and I didn't want that. In this case, the new family room is a couple of steps down from the kitchen, then there are a couple of steps down to the patio, which is then only a bit above ground level."

The project is still in the early design phase. Sewell is currently exploring the possibilities of having the entire addition prefabricated and simply lowered onto the site.



1200 New Hampshire Avenue, NW

Courtesy of Bonstra | Haresign Architects

## Addition to 1200 New Hampshire Avenue, NW

The original architects of the office building at 1200 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, which was completed in 1978,

surely envisioned the small, triangular plaza in front of the building as a public amenity, drawing pedestrians into adjacent shops and restaurants while providing places to sit in pleasant weather. In reality, although one end of the space is often used by the adjacent restaurant for outdoor dining, the fairly steep slope of the plaza has always discouraged passersby from cutting across it to get to the retail spaces. Exacerbating the problem is the fact that the storefronts are set back from the primary façade plane about six feet, behind large concrete columns, further discouraging pedestrians from entering the shops and food service establishments. Tellingly, one of the prime corners of the ground floor is currently used not for retail, but as back-office space for one of the building tenants.

To address these problems, **Bonstra | Haresign Architects** has designed a one-level addition to the building that will fill in the small plaza while storefront modifications will bring retail spaces right to the edge of the sidewalk. The triangular addition will provide a double-height space with a vast wall of glass along New Hampshire Avenue—an ideal location for an elegant restaurant or high-end store. The new construction will also bring the main lobby of the building closer to the street, while a new canopy and planters will make the entrance more inviting.

On top of the addition will be a green roof, which will simultaneously address environmental concerns about stormwater runoff and enhance views from offices above. Moreover, in concert with the soaring glass wall of the restaurant/retail space below, the green roof will terminate the visual axis from M Street, NW, which angles away from its predominant east-west orientation just before it reaches the building.

The owners and the architects hope that the redesigned street frontage of 1200 New Hampshire will help to enliven a traditionally undervalued intersection at the juncture between the Dupont Circle, downtown, and West End neighborhoods.



Rendering of proposed addition and renovation of 1200 New Hampshire Avenue, NW.

Courtesy of Bonstra | Haresign Architects

## Renovation of 1510 H Street, NW

A commission to renovate a building just off of historic Lafayette Square, practically within shouting distance of the White House, could prove intimidating to many architects. The area is unquestionably a sensitive one, and it would be easy for an architect of such a project to go for a very safe, quiet solution in order to avoid competing with the many important buildings nearby. Given just this sort of opportunity, however, **Eric Colbert & Associates** opted not to pursue the safest, quietest solution.

The firm was hired to convert a small office building at 1510 H Street, NW, dating from the early 1960s, into a commercial office condominium. Although the structure was formerly home to the offices of United Press International, which sounds rather glamorous, the building itself was a dreary, eminently forgettable affair in grey concrete and glass. No part of the building, other than its basic structure, was worth saving, and thus it could be regarded as a blank slate for design.

The narrow site is in between two larger buildings that could hardly be more different. To the east stands the dignified, neoclassical Union Trust Building, which now houses the American Bar Association, completed in 1907. To the west is one of the Spartan, red brick towers designed by John Carl Warnecke in the 1960s as part of a plan to save the historic buildings on Lafayette Square—the towers allowed the smaller buildings to be preserved, but can hardly be regarded as beautiful works of architecture in their own right. Given the profound contrast between these two immediate neighbors, Colbert and his team felt free to seek an entirely new architectural expression for their project.

In their design, the main façade is unabashedly modern and abstractly composed, and yet manages to mediate between the two adjacent structures in subtle ways. The use of limestone and the balance of horizontal and vertical elements recall the materials and composition of the Union Trust building, while the tautness and proportions of the glass curtain wall allude to the façade of the Warnecke building. Moreover, while the original building at 1510 had an essentially flat façade that aligned with the edge of Union Trust, the redesign includes a projecting bay, which brings part of the façade into the same plane as the edge of Warnecke's tower, which is closer to the street.

Colbert is also making significant improvements to the side and rear of the building, which is due for completion this spring. On the south side, where upper floors have exceptional views of the Washington Monument, the architects added a broad, glassy bay. Perhaps some lucky new office condominium owners will be throwing grand parties to watch the fireworks on the Mall come July 4th.

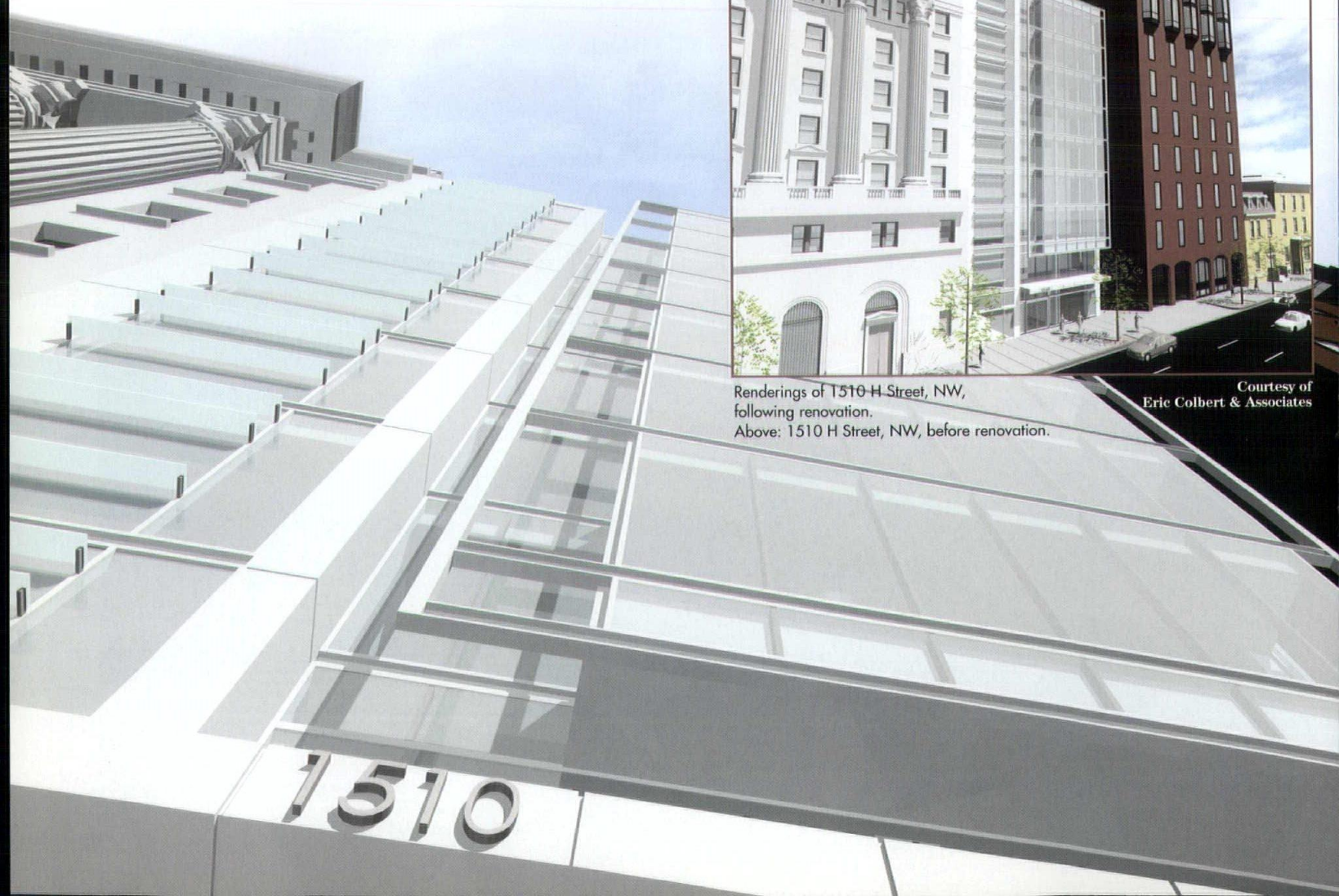


Courtesy of  
Eric Colbert & Associates



Renderings of 1510 H Street, NW,  
following renovation.  
Above: 1510 H Street, NW, before renovation.

Courtesy of  
Eric Colbert & Associates



## West End 25

The firm of **Shalom Baranes Associates** is currently working on the conversion of the former Bureau of National Affairs headquarters on 25th Street, NW, to residential use. Completed in the 1970s, the original structure consisted of twin, six-story towers connected by a one-story lobby at the rear of the site. The architects are adding four stories to each tower and extending the low-rise link to match the new height of the towers, creating a U-shaped building slated to accommodate 280 apartments around a small landscaped courtyard.

The renovation will result in a building that is not only substantially larger, but also much more interesting. Whereas the original structure was rigidly rectilinear and symmetrical, the new version will feature angled walls facing the courtyard—facilitating views across the street to the edge of Rock Creek Park—and variations in the composition of the façades. The interplay between simple glass curtain walls and projecting bays framed in white metal will lend depth to the principal façades while providing propitious locations for balconies.



Rendering of West End 25, as seen from 25th Street, NW.

Courtesy of Shalom Baranes Associates

The building will incorporate a green roof, low-emissivity glass to reduce indoor/outdoor heat transfer, and other sustainability strategies aimed at earning a LEED Silver certification for the project. It is expected to be complete in the fall of this year.

## City Market at O

Washington was once peppered with public markets that were neighborhood landmarks. Robust, masonry structures dating from the 19th century, with large, open spaces covered by trussed roofs, these facilities used to be the primary sources of food and other necessities for much of the city. The largest of them, the Center Market on Constitution Avenue, NW, was demolished in 1931 to make way for the National Archives, but several of the original market buildings survive in some form. Eastern Market on Capitol Hill, for example, which is currently undergoing renovation after a fire, still serves its original functions as a commercial and community hub. Across town, the building that was once the Georgetown Market now houses a single, high-end food shop.

Another of the old public market structures still exists, if only barely. The O Street Market, in Shaw, was built in 1881 but closed in 1968 after the riots that erupted in the aftermath of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. It reopened in 1980 but struggled for years before being abandoned again. Then, in 2003, not long before a renovation was slated to begin, the roof of the old building collapsed in a snowstorm, taking parts of the façade with it. At that point, many area residents feared that the historic structure would never be revived.

Now in the works, however, is an ambitious, mixed-use development on the block bounded by 7th, 9th, O, and P Streets, NW, encompassing the O Street Market, which will be rebuilt to accommodate part of a new Giant supermarket (the current Giant, just west of the historic structure, will be demolished). Designed



Rendering of renovated O Street Market, with senior housing at right and rental apartment building in background at left.

Courtesy of Shalom Baranes Associates

by **Shalom Baranes Associates**, the project will include a hotel, two rental apartment buildings, a condominium building, and senior housing. As part of the initiative, a block-long stretch of 8th Street, which has been closed as a public thoroughfare for decades, will be re-opened to traffic.

The architectural expression of the proposed new structures in the complex is both bold and varied. The senior housing, for instance, located just north of the historic market, will incorporate a structure dubbed "the Cube," which will be encased in a striking yet elegant metal grid. The residential building immediately to the west of the old market is noteworthy for its long, projecting glass bays that relate to the divisions of the apartments within.


The project has received the approval of the DC Historic Preservation Review Board and zoning authorities. A completion date has not yet been announced. 🏡



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